

Abstract

Method and apparatus for automatically reading bar code symbols using a reading device containing a laser beam configured to provide a scan field. The method involves automatically detecting the presence of a bar code within the scan field by flickering the laser beam. In automatic response to the detection of a bar code, the automatic bar code symbol reading device generates a laser beam scanning pattern and reads the detected bar code by producing scan data signals from the detected bar code and thereafter collecting and analyzing these data signals. Further aspects of the present invention relate to hand-holdable data collection devices adapted for use with the automatic bar code symbol reading device to form a portable symbol reading system characterized by versatility and simplicity of use.